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Merry-Go-Round

Nixon's Plans for A Domestic Crisis

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ONE OF President Nixon's earliest acts after he moved into the White House was to draw up contingency plans for the employment of federal troops in case of a domestic crisis.

The planning was intended to cope with the widespread riots and demonstrations that rocked the nation in the late 1960s. The President has the power to implement the plans, however, any time he feels conditions "make it impracticable to enforce the laws."

Some high officials, aware of Mr. Nixon's belligerent attitude toward his Watergate critics, wonder whether he would use his emergency powers to hang on to the presidency if he should be faced with impeachment.

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SOURCES close to the President insist, however, he loves the United States too much to tamper with its democratic institutions. But this hasn't entirely stopped the worried whispers which we have heard at the highest levels of government.

Within the White House, he has spoken of the danger of turning our delicate foreign affairs over to an inexperienced President. Our sources say he sounded as if he is determined to carry on as a patriotic duty.

The plans are ready for him to declare a state of emergency, meanwhile, if he should choose. One classified document, known as the "Interdepartmental Action Plan for Civil Disturbances," outlines the responsibilities of the Defense and Justice Departments in the event the Armed Services are mobilized.

This detailed plan, which includes sample proclamations and executive orders for the President to sign, was delivered to Mr. Nixon on May 19, 1969.

Although the emergency plans are over four years old, they have been updated and reflect present policy.

One of the proposed proclamations deals with law and order in the Washington metropolitan area. First, Mr. Nixon could "command all persons engaged in acts of violence to cease and desist therefrom and to disperse and retire peaceably forthwith."

If demonstrators failed to disperse, Mr. Nixon could then issue an executive order calling upon "units and members of the Armed Forces (to) suppress the violence and to restore law and order in and about the Washington metropolitan area."

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OUR White House sources emphasize that the President hasn't even hinted he might declare an emergency and put Washington under martial law. But they admit he has surrounded himself with men who would probably carry out his orders.

His closest associate now is Alexander Haig, a former Army general. The lawyer who has Mr. Nixon's ear, former Pentagon counsel J. Fred Buzhardt, is a West Point graduate. John Bennett, another aide in the President's immediate circle, is a retired two-star general.